

## Mekong Thought Leadership and Think Tanks Network Program (MTT)

### Call for Applications: Media-Research Collaboration Fellowship for Environmental Reporting

## Introduction

Mekong Thought Leadership and Think Tanks Network Program (MTT), hosted by SEI Asia, is providing **six media-research collaboration fellowships** (media fellowships) to **selected journalists in the Mekong Region**. Each fellowship is **worth up to AUD 5,000 (~ USD 3,300) for activities to be undertaken from October 2024 to May 2025**.

The media fellowship aims to produce and publish impactful stories highlighting critical environmental sustainability issues related to the MTT program's research activities. The media fellowships aim to support MTT's granted projects in the Mekong Region (four flagship studies and seven rapid response projects) to better communicate our science to the public for enhanced visibility and policy impacts.

**Launch of the Call: 19 August 2024**

**Application deadline: 15 September 2024, 23:59 (Bangkok/Indochina time)**

Submissions of applications will only be accepted through the online submission platform:

<https://sei.submittable.com/submit/301218/mekong-thought-leadership-and-think-tanks-network-program-mtt-media-fellowship>

## Media-Research Collaboration Fellowship

The **media-research collaboration fellowship** seeks to enable collaboration and close interactions between MTT's knowledge-based policy influence organizations (KBPIOs) that focus on generating or using the evidence to inform the policy and practice (e.g., think tanks, researchers, and practitioners) and those that influence the changes in society through the public (e.g., Mekong-based journalists).

Researchers from the KBPIOs can help the media fellows to better access and understand the inclusive knowledge co-production processes and their results.

In exchange, the media fellows will guide the MTT researchers in crafting communications that resonate with non-academic audiences while conveying the importance of the scientific findings.

This way, both sides benefit and help each other equally, building a strong media-research collaboration. (Please see the previous examples of our [media-research partnership here](#).)

Journalists and media practitioners awarded the fellowship will receive guidance from MTT researchers, who will provide access to their research and study sites to enhance their capacity to report on environmental issues. MTT researchers will supply scientific messaging to help journalists report on complex environmental stories drawn from issues around the intersections of water security, energy security, and climate change impacts in the Mekong, share access to networking opportunities, and coordinate visits to the research field sites.

While the story must relate to the key themes within the MTT program and granted projects, media fellows are expected to maintain their independence in choosing the focus and angle of their story and the format and delivery of their outputs (either written or multimedia).

### **Mekong Thought Leadership and Think Tanks Network Program (MTT)**

MTT aims to work in the Mekong Region with national and regional knowledge-based policy influence organizations (KBPIOs) to enhance their effectiveness and inclusiveness in policy engagement. This will be combined with communications based on high-quality research, practical advice generated by the program, cross-learning among relevant organizations, and drawing upon relevant Australian and other expertise and experiences in water security, energy security, and climate change mitigation and adaptation. (See [more details here.](#))

MTT will develop clear and actionable evidence-based solutions to water, energy, and development challenges in the Mekong Region to bring about positive changes in policy and practice.

As a core objective of MTT work, we want to strengthen collaboration between researchers and the media to ensure that our research results are centered around local and regional needs, reach out to key policy audiences, and support positive changes in policy and practice.

### **Working with the MTT projects**

With this fund, six media fellows will work with researchers from MTT's 11 granted projects [here](#). The media fellows need to identify which MTT projects they want to collaborate with and engage in for the duration of the fund, which is about eight months.

The media fellows can identify this through their proposal, the initial meeting/workshop with them, and the follow-up discussion on the MTT projects; they may change their focus to support a different MTT project. The media fellows need to work with 2-3 research project teams.

## **Objectives**

MTT's media-research collaboration fund aims to:

- Strengthen the collaboration between media and research in the Mekong Region to facilitate the sharing of knowledge and evidence on critical sustainability issues to policymakers and the general public
- Enhance the capacity of MTT researchers in communicating to non-academic audiences

- Enhance the contextual and in-depth reporting of complex environmental and scientific topics related to MTT work, and
- Promote and raise the visibility of MTT’s work in the Mekong Region.

## Who can apply?

**Six fellowships** worth up to **AUD 5,000 (~ USD 3,300)** will be awarded to selected applicants. Applicants must be citizens of or based in the countries of the Mekong Region (Cambodia, Lao PDR, Thailand, and Vietnam). We encourage early-career media professionals to take advantage of this opportunity.

- Journalists (early to mid-career, freelancers\* or groups of beginner journalists who wish to collaborate).
- Multimedia producers (early career) who work with photography, audio, video, and/or animation.

Early-career candidates from diverse genders, indigenous groups, people with diverse ethnicities, and persons with disabilities are especially encouraged to apply.

\*Both freelance and staff journalists can apply. Freelance journalists are encouraged to provide a supporting letter of intent from an outlet or organization that will disseminate their work.

\*\* The MTT Secretariat reserves the right to maintain a balanced portfolio of media fellowships considering required support of MTT’s program activities including granted projects, which may involve considering the countries of origin and gender diversity of the media fellows.

All applications will be handled with strict confidentiality.

## Selection criteria

**Knowledge exchange collaboration:** Applicants must demonstrate their willingness to exchange knowledge and build partnerships with the research teams. This fellowship is designed so that journalists can play an essential role in enhancing researchers’ capability in communicating their research to the general public.

**Relevance:** The story proposal must relate to one or more of the MTT projects [here](#). The proposal must explain why the chosen topic is relevant to environmental issues in the applicant’s country or in the Mekong Region as a whole.

**Angle:** If the central topic has already been addressed by the media, the story should focus on a new worthwhile aspect of the environmental issues. Journalists are encouraged to report on these issues with a **science or policy lens**.

**Impact:** The story must inform, encourage discourse, and urge policy action and reach the wider public.

**Feasibility:** All facets of the story proposal must be realistic and achievable within the given timeline.

**Diversity:** The story proposal should include as much gender, ethnic, linguistic, geographic, and cultural diversity as possible.

## Partnering with MTT research teams

Each applicant (or group of applicants working in collaboration) will partner with 2-3 MTT granted project teams. Applicants are encouraged to review the profiles of the 11 MTT projects [here](#) and choose not more than 3 potential projects they would most like to collaborate with and write a story about.

**Project selection should preferably include a study site within the applicants' own country or place of work in the Mekong Region.** This can help ensure the media fellows visit study sites for their stories.

If your proposal is awarded the media fellowship, the MTT Secretariat will approach the research teams that you have identified according to your top three choices to see if they have a common interest in this media-research collaboration opportunity. The media fellows need to work with 2-3 research teams. MTT reserves the right to identify a specific research team for the media fellow if none of their selected (or first-choice) teams are available for this collaboration.

## Required outputs

**The media fellows need to submit at least one of the following:**

- *Text-based stories with accompanying images:* 1000–3000 words plus two or three images.
- *Short films or video interviews:* (6–10 minutes) with a 200-word written summary (and English subtitles if needed).
- *Audio podcasts:* No longer than 20 minutes with a 200-word written summary.

The outputs can be in an English language publication. The output can also be produced in Khmer, Lao, Thai, Vietnamese or other Mekong Region languages, but English translation (i.e. transcript for print and podcast or subtitles for multimedia video) must be provided.

The media fellows are expected to also participate in their in-country MTT events (such as knowledge exchange or policy workshops), visit MTT project field sites, participate in one MTT regional forum, and support MTT communications activities of interest.

The final stories will be presented at the Regional MTT Forum (or media workshop) around May/June 2025.

For MTT reporting purposes, we request the media fellow to provide a 1-2 page “reflection report” at the end of the fellowship with their feedback and experiences working on the media-research collaboration fund. The template for the reflection report will be provided.

### **Publishing of the stories and reporting**

The applicants must **propose where their stories (or multimedia) will be published**, indicating the name of the respective website or news outlet. All stories (whether published in an external outlet or not) will be republished with the required permissions on the [SEI](#) and [SUMERNET](#) websites.

## Application and selection process

The media fellows will be selected through an open call and competitive process, following the abovementioned criteria.

Applicants can submit their application through the online form available at this link: <https://sei.submittable.com/submit/301218/mekong-thought-leadership-and-think-tanks-network-program-mtt-media-fellowship>.

**The application deadline is 15 September 23:59 (Bangkok local time).**

The following information must be uploaded as part of the application:

#### **Required:**

- A recent Curriculum Vitae (CV)
- A brief proposal of no more than 500 words for the article or multimedia product, choosing one (or more than one, if cross-cutting) of the MTT projects. The proposal should outline the key aspects of the story or product and their relevance to the chosen area of MTT project work.

#### **Optional:**

- A reference letter from a regional media institution or news outlet

- Sample or portfolio of work

**Knowledge exchange** collaboration: Applicants must demonstrate their willingness to exchange and share knowledge and build this partnership with the MTT program and research teams through this opportunity.

## Important dates

- Launch of the call : 19 August 2024
- Application deadline : 15 September 2024
- Review and shortlisting : 30 September 2024
- Awarding decision : 11 October 2024
- Announcement : 15–18 October 2024
- Contracting : 21 October–31 December 2024
- Fellowship starting date : 15 December 2024–2 January 2025

## Fellowship payment and procedures

Selected applicants will be awarded up to **AUD 5,000 per fellowship**. This comprises a fellowship honorarium of **AUD 3,000 (provided in two tranches)** and up to **AUD 2,000 to cover actual travel and related costs** for the field visit to meet researchers and study sites.

The fellowship amount is designed to recognize that the media fellow will spend at least 20 working days on the media-research collaboration.

At the end of the fellowship period, media fellows must submit a financial report (using the supplied template) along with receipts or supporting documents for travel reimbursement and other costs (of no more than AUD 2,000).

## Contact

For more information on the media collaboration fund or MTT, please contact Rajesh Daniel ([rajesh.daniel@sei.org](mailto:rajesh.daniel@sei.org)) or Variya Plungwatana ([variya.plungwatana@sei.org](mailto:variya.plungwatana@sei.org)).